



California State Fire Marshal **CODE INTERPRETATION**

Date Issued	04-21-00	Interpretation #	00-005
Topic	Fire alarm visual notification appliances in classrooms		
Code Section(s)	§3505.1, California Building Code (1998 ed.)		
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Are fire alarm visual notification appliances required to be installed in every school classroom?

Section 3505.1, of the 1998 California Building Code [*SFM amendment to NFPA 72 (1996), Section 6-4.5*] provides specific locations where fire alarm visual notification appliances should be installed when a fire alarm system is required. Classrooms are not included in the list of locations requiring fire alarm visual notification appliances. However, although not specifically required in classrooms, visual appliances may be required when the following conditions exist or may exist depending upon the use of the room:

1. Specified of specialized classrooms for the deaf or hearing impaired.
2. Schools for the deaf or hearing impaired.
3. Band and music practice rooms.
4. Assembly rooms, large meeting rooms and gymnasiums.
5. Occupational shops
6. Classrooms where the ambient noise level is anticipated to exceed 105 decibels.
7. Multipurpose classrooms that may be utilized in the above conditions

The intent of SFM amendment, CBC Section 3505.1, [*NFPA 72 (1996), Section 6-4.5, #11, “any other areas for common use”*] relating to visual appliances, was not to include school classrooms as “*other areas for common use*”. Classrooms are mainly occupied by permanent students assigned to a specific classroom under the direct supervision of responsible adults. “*Common use areas*” in schools are primarily transient areas occupied by students and faculty in transit or for specific temporary use (i.e., corridors/hallways, locker rooms study halls, lunch rooms, etc.). “*Common use areas*” areas are not ordinarily under the direct supervision of an adult.

The design of the fire alarm system, which includes the types and locations of visual notification appliances, should be individualized to the facility based on sound engineering judgment and standard practices, with effective communication between all parties involved in the process.